

Out of the cold by HOPoverhere

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Summary:

Hop gets El a cat and thinks it's a good idea.

Post Season 2 Hopper family fluff.

Out of the cold

Author's Note:

Just a little fic with Hop, El, and a cat.
And Flo being patient. As always.

Thanks for reading! Hope you like it :)

"Hey, I'm home," he said as she unlocked the door for him.

"Eight-fifteen." She said from inside her room.

"Yea, I know. I'm sorry." He said as he placed the box carefully on the table. "Hey, come out I got something to show you."

She gingerly came out to the kitchen, looking at the box curiously.

"What is it?"

"Well, it's a present. For you." He smiled at her as her eyes glowed at the words.

"Go on, open it. But be careful."

"Why?" She asked.

The cat jumped out of the box as it grew claustrophobic and startled El.

Her breath started to tighten and suddenly she felt paralysed with fear.

Tears started to form in her eyes as her horrified face stared at the cat.

"Hey, what's wrong?" Hopper asked, gripping her shoulder gently in concerned affection.

The cat looked at El for the first time, and panic curled inside of her. She let out a scream as her face dripped with tears. The cat got

scared and ran off the table and hid under Hopper's bed in panic, knocking a beer can to the floor in the rush.

The scream was so loud that a window cracked. It was not something unusual at the Hopper household, but it was always a result of a fight, and not out of something he did to try cheer her up.

Hopper was dumbfounded. El ran into her room, and banged the door behind her in fear.

Hop really did not know what to do with himself, or El, or the cat.

As he had learned throughout the year and a half of keeping her with him, he gave her some time to calm down and decided to confront her later.

The cat was scooped up under his bed, panting with fear; he decided to take the same approach with it.

He could hear her cry in her room, and it broke his heart. For once he tried to do something to compromise for her lonely cooped up self, and it had made her react this way. So much for halfway happy he figured...

After a while he knocked on El's door; no answer.

"Hey, El, you ok?" Still no answer.

"Listen I'll take it back, okay? Don't worry about it, it won't hurt you."

She did not answer to any of his pleas.

He decided to sleep on it and try to find what the hell he was going to do with this cat now.

He took a small bowl of water and some cut ham in a shallow plate and placed them under his bed, where the cat's eyes glimmered in the dark. He tried to call it to come closer, but it was simply too scared.

It was still a kitten, maybe a few months old. Its fur was grey and ruffled, with green eyes that pleaded Hopper to take it home. He had seen it on the way home from the station that night. It was shivering

when he found it, alone in the snow. It reminded him of someone else he found.

As he saw it, the thought immediately sprung to him to get it for El. It was quite difficult to make the cat come closer to him, luckily his half eaten sandwich came in handy. He always kept food in the truck.

The thought of getting her a pet had crossed his mind a couple of times in recent months, not wanting her to be alone in the cabin all the time. He figured a dog would be too much work and was loud, so their site could be breached. On the other hand he thought a cat would be perfect for her. They're independent, don't like people that much, and aren't needy. Like he and El.

Now this cat was terrified under his bed and his daughter was terrified in hers.

Morning light shot through the creaky windows and he awoke to a warm weight beside him. The cat was snuggly tucked between his beard and the pillow.

His first instant was to shrug away and not let himself get too attached. He knew he was a softy beneath that haggard attitude he put out.

He got up and the cat immediately followed him. El was still in her room.

He knocked on her door.

She reluctantly opened and took a shot backwards when she saw the cat behind him.

He saw the terrified look in her eyes.

"Hey, hey, I'll take him, okay? After breakfast today, I'll take him away."

She nodded.

"Come on, there are some Eggo's with your name on them." he smiled, trying to make her feel calmer.

She was still shaking at its sight and was hesitant in going out of her room. "Don't worry, he won't hurt you."

They sat in the kitchen, her eyes never leaving the cat in unsettlement.

He did not try to ask her why she was so scared.

"I'll take him away, now. Okay?"

He grabbed his hat and jacket, and the box and headed out.

"Don't hurt him." She said as he was about to open the door.

He looked at her, slightly confused at her sense of worry.

"No, of course not kiddo."

He drove to the place he knew best.

He knocked on her door, with box in hand.

"Hop, hey." Joyce said as she frazzled around trying to find her work vest.

"Hey, um, weird request. Do you want a cat?" he said, gesticulating with his eyes to the box.

Joyce looked at him and then peeked into the box.

"What are you doing with a cat at seven in the morning?"

"Well, I got it for El but... Well, she got terrified when she saw it, screamed so loud it cracked a window. So, yea we can't keep it."

She made a slight smile at his gesture for El, and at the comical nature of the small cat trying to get out of the box and gnawing at his large hands.

"Ah he's cute alright, but we can't. Will's allergic to cats."

"Oh, alright then." He lost a bit more self confidence.

"Sorry Hop," she said as she stroked the cat's fur tentatively.

"Nah don't worry, it was my stupid idea after all. See you Joyce, say hi to the boys."

He left with a bit of a panic on him. He simply could not take the cat to work with him, and did not want to keep him in the cabin with El.

And he simply was not going to take it back where he found it.

He reluctantly pulled back to the cabin.

El got startled at the sight of the box still in his hands with the sound of meowing coming out.

"Hey, he'll have to stay here till I find somewhere to take him... Hey, hey, don't be scared, okay? He won't hurt you. I'll put him in the shed out back, he won't be in here."

She nodded, slightly out of breath.

He got the water bowl and a few more pieces of ham and headed with the box out to the shed.

She studied him attentively.

How could they have wanted her to do that? Her own Papa wanted her to do that, to a cat. The sight of the cat her new "papa" had brought flashed back all the feelings she felt that moment; how the cat looked at her, how the people in the white coats looked at her, what they did to her after she could not do that to the cat ...

Hop returned to the cabin, worried about her. "He's in the shed. He won't come in here and he won't hurt you. I'm sorry, didn't mean to upset you." He did not know why she reacted that way, but did not want her to hate him for it.

"Listen I got to go to work. If anything happens, call me. I'll try to find somewhere to take him tonight. Heat up some leftovers from last night for lunch, okay?"

She looked at him, slightly calmed down. "Okay." Papa would never tell her something like that.

He went to the station, late as usual.

"Look who showed up," Flo greeted him as he walked in.

"Yea I know I'm late yea yea ..." As per routine, he poured himself a cup of coffee and picked up a donut. He headed into his office with little talk.

Flo noticed something different about him. He'd always joke around and mock one of the other officers, but he was just of little words this morning.

She decided to give him a bit of time till she went to give him the day's work, not that there were any pressing matters that needed dealing with.

"Hey Chief," Flo said attentively as she entered his office.

She gave him a list of reports and described the boring stuff she knew he wouldn't read.

"That's all I guess."

He nodded and thanked her simply.

"Hey Chief, you alright?" Flo asked. She usually did not ask, but knew he had stopped taking the pills recently and thought she might help.

"Yea yea I'm alright. You worry too much about me, Flo," he said as he flashed her one of his signature grins.

"Hmm, lady trouble?!" She always nagged him about getting a nice wife who could take care of him, always out of a joke of course.

He sighed. "Yea, something like that."

Flo smirked. "If anyone calls, I'll tell them to bugger off."

He smiled. "Thanks Flo."

In truth, she was the only one who took care of him.

The day went by quite slowly. He fiddled with the ball he kept in his drawer.

What the hell was he going to do with the cat. He certainly wasn't going to give it to Eugene or Merril; they had dogs on their farms and knew neither were fond of cats on account they scared birds away when they were hunting.

He knew Mrs Henderson was indeed fond of cats, but did not want to dump it on El's friend. Also he did not want it to possibly get eaten by a demodog.

He tried his last call.

He waited for Powell and Callahan to get out on rounds, he knew they'd make fun of him.

He got out of his office, pretending to stand at the coffee station while fiddling around with packs of sugar.

"Hey Flo, do you like cats?"

Flo turned to him with an apprehensive look on her face.

She studied him a bit.

"Let me guess, you got one coz' a dog's too much work and now you realised you can't take care of it anyway?"

It was more a statement than a question.

He tried to keep himself composed.

"Damn Flo, hit it right on the head." He smirked.

She sighed.

"Anyway, you want it?"

Flo did not speak. She was not going to let him get away with it too easily.

"It's still a kitten. It's grey and got green eyes that'll match your carpet."

She chuckled.

"You know, I used to ask, before, but I just can't be bothered to ask you why you got a cat anyway. But I have to hand it to you Chief, you've gotten a lot better at taking care of yourself at least. I wasn't going to tell you in front of the others, won't give you that much to brag about in front of them, but I just wanted to tell you."

He smiled silently.

"What's that got to do about the cat?" He asked jokingly. Flo rolled her eyes.

"But thanks," he said composedly as he looked down at his coffee.

She nodded.

"So, do you want to take him?"

"Alright, alright ... The things you make me do, Hop."

"Come on, you'll love it."

"Please don't tell me you left him in the truck?" she inquired, a bit worried.

"No, no, he's at home. I can drive over to your's after work with him."

"Alright, Chief," Flo said with a smirk and a slight chuckle.

"Thanks Flo," he smiled at her as he made his way back to his office, relieved that he was getting rid of it and that it was going somewhere safe. He did not know why he felt this attached to a cat he's had for less than a day.

He hurried from the station to get to the cabin and take the cat to Flo's.

El opened the door for him.

He entered the cabin rather haphazardly. He stopped at the door at the sight in front of him.

"Thanks for Cat." El said with big eyes looking at him, then turning back to continue playing with the cat, running a piece of string she found. She giggled as the cat chased around after it.

Hop let out a sigh. He really could not understand this kid. Though she was telekinetic so that was it perhaps.

He saw she made him a plate of ham and a bowl of milk, like she had seen on the television. There was also a towel clumsily made into a bed.

"I, I thought you were scared of cats, that you didn't like him?"

"No, I like him. I was just scared."

He moved in close and kneeled down to ruffle her hair, and the cat's.

He did not try to ask her why she got so scared, he was just grateful that she was ok.

"What are you gonna name him?"

"Cat. Already told you."

"Oh, that's his name?" He chuckled.

"Why? You don't like it?"

"No, no ... It's bitchin'." He smiled at her.

He really could not get a hold of her.

He got up to fix dinner, which was really just setting the timer on the

microwave.

The unexpected sight in the living room made him forget that he was supposed to be on his way to Flo's, with Cat.

"Dammit," he muttered to himself.

He called her. "Hey Flo."

"Hey Chief."

"Hey, um, change of plans. Do you mind if I keep the cat?"

"What? I already bought cat food and a bed, even a litter box."

"Oh, shit."

He could hear her chuckle through the telephone.

"Like I said, I used to ask before, but I can't be bothered." Flo started laughing slightly at the other end of the telephone.

He chuckled.

"Thanks Flo, see you tomorrow."

"Yea yea, just make sure you won't forget about it or feed him beer or something."

She could be funny, only with him though. The other officers did not deserve to experience this side of her.

"Nah, don't want him to be as out of shape as me."

Flo chuckled at the stupidity of his joke, but was glad he was alright with it.

"Night Flo. Thanks."

"Anytime. See you Jim."

He hung up and spent a good three seconds staring at El playing with the cat.

"Come on, let's have dinner. Even Cat."

She sat down only when the cat came to the table, not wanting to leave its sight.

They ate quietly, enjoying the silence and admiring El's brightly lit face.

"I'm sorry I got scared yesterday."

"You don't need to apologise for that." He said softly.

"I got reminded. Of the bad people."

He was still.

"If you don't want to talk about it, it's ok." He said as he looked closely at her.

She paused and started to stroke the cat again as it purred around.

"They made me kill one." She looked sadly at the cat.

He was shocked and suddenly felt intimidated.

"But I didn't want to. I got scared."

Tears were welling up in her eyes.

He moved his chair beside her and hugged her as she calmed down.

"It's over now. You're here with me." He kissed the top of her head softly.

"And Cat!" she said excitedly.

"Yea yea, and Cat." He chuckled and was relieved that for once he did not fuck up.

Almost.